

OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

Fiscal Year 2005

Fiscal Year 2005 was a politically active year for the Town Clerk's Office. With the Presidential election our office was directly involved in the excitement that ensues during the election season. To say the least, the Town Clerk's Office was very active in providing services for the various elections throughout the fiscal year. In addition to handling election services, our office continued to efficiently provide the daily routine services of executing passport applications, notarizations, certified copies of vital records, filing zoning and planning applications and decisions, maintenance of Town records and issuance of licenses and permits.

Elections

The fiscal year began with changing the Town's precinct lines, after a Special Act was passed by the state legislature. The Special Act was necessary to rectify the errors in population counts within Town census blocks, which led to a disproportionate number of people in each of the precincts. The first step in creating the new precincts was to determine the boundary lines, so that new maps could be drawn up by Michael Olkin, the Town's GIS Administrator. Notices then needed to be sent to each registered voter to inform them of their new polling location. By establishing these new precincts, the Amherst Representative Town Meeting would be better represented, as Precinct 10 would no longer solely encompass University of Massachusetts on-campus housing. Precinct 10 would once again include residential streets surrounding the University and this will somewhat rectify the low voter turnout in Precinct 10. The change in precinct lines and locations also initiated discussions between the Town and the University Student Government Association about creating a sub-precinct at the University. Initial efforts to create the sub-precinct in time for the 2004 state election failed when Governor Romney declined to sponsor the necessary Special Act. In December, the Select Board granted the SGA's request by voting to establish a new sub-precinct at the New Africa House for the dormitories in Precinct 9. The new polling location was first utilized at the Annual Town Election on March 29, 2005.

The Town Clerk's Office oversaw three elections during the fiscal year. The first election was the State Primary on September 14, 2004, which resulted in a 12.6% voter turnout. The 2004 State Election on November 2nd, which was a Presidential election, had a high turnout of 65.0% of the registered voters in town. The 2004 State Election also saw a large increase in absentee ballots, especially for Specially Qualified Voters. Specially Qualified Voters are U.S. citizens who are living abroad and declare that their last U.S. address was in Amherst. However, before the Clerk's Office can issue a ballot, we must research their residency claim by looking through census records from earlier years. In some instances we were looking through census records from the 1960's. The final election, the 2004 Annual Town Election, on March 30th had races for the Select Board, Jones Library Trustees, and School Committee; in addition, all 24 Town Meeting members, in each of the ten precincts, had to run for election due to the change in precinct lines. The voters also had an opportunity to vote on two ballot questions. The first question was a resubmission of the binding Charter question and the second ballot question called for amending the Amherst Town Government Act (ATGA) to create consistent election hours for all elections. The Annual Town Election brought out 35.2% of the voters, who voted to defeat the proposed Charter and overwhelmingly decided to amend the ATGA to create consistent election hours. Following the Annual Town Election, the Clerk's Office had to conduct ten special elections in order to break ties that existed in Town Meeting membership due to multiple candidates receiving the same number of votes, so that their terms could not be determined. The Department needed to prepare ballots for each of the special elections, then mail each of the elected Town Meeting members the ballots for that particular precinct and tally the ballots in order to officially certify the election results.

The Clerk's Office also conducted the second annual election for the Town Meeting Coordinating Committee. The election process began with the collection of the nominations from Town Meeting members, followed by the distribution of statements from the candidates. Our office then conducted the election at Town Meeting and posted the results the following day on the Town's website.

The Town Clerk's Office offered eight training sessions for election workers and wardens for the three elections during the fiscal year. The election worker training session prior to the Presidential election had an unprecedented turnout of about 100 workers. The training sessions were greatly needed to update the workers on the new provisions of the Help America Vote Act.

Town Meeting

Three Special Town Meetings, as well as an eleven-session Annual Town Meeting, were held in FY 05. Six out of the forty articles on the Annual Town Meeting warrant were placed by citizen petition. In accordance with the Amherst Town Government Act, Section 1.5421, and the Town Clerk's Office informed Town Meeting members of the vacancies that existed in their precincts. Twenty-seven vacancies existed; of these, twenty-two were in Precinct 10 alone. The Town Clerk's Office conducted a public meeting on October 26, 2004, for the purpose of counting ballots to fill the vacancies. We successfully filled two vacancies in Precinct 5 for a term to expire at the next Annual Town Election.

Voter Registration

Voter Registration was high due to the Presidential election. The Town Clerk's Office conducted 3 voter registration sessions, one before each election. The voter registration session on October 13, 2004, brought in 3,500 voter registration forms on that day alone. The Town Clerk's Office also assisted with a voter registration session on the campus of the University of Massachusetts on September 24, 2005.

Board of Registrars

Fiscal Year 2005

Robert W. McAllister, Sr. – Republican, Chair
Gladys Rodriguez – Democrat
Doris Holden – Republican
Anna Maciaszek, Clerk to the Board of Registrars

The Board of Registrars held voter registration sessions on August 28, 2004, October 13, 2004 and March 9, 2005, as these dates were the deadlines to register to vote in the 2004 State Primary, 2004 State Election and the 2005 Annual Town Election, respectively. The turnout at the 2004 State Primary and the 2005 Annual Town Election were moderate. However, as expected, the turn-out on October 13, 2004, for the 2004 State Election, was extremely high. The University of Massachusetts delivered an estimated 3,000 registrations that day, and around 500 people came directly to Town Hall to register to vote. Each of the voter registration sessions was conducted from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Town Clerk's Office.

A large number of initiative petitions, as well as Town and state nominations papers were circulated during the fiscal year. The Clerk's Office also certified the signatures for a referendum ballot question on the athletic fields on Potwine Lane. The petitioners garnered a sufficient number of signatures to call a referendum election so that the question could be voted on Town-wide. As part of the certification process, Town Clerk staff members are authorized by the Board of Registrars to assign codes to the signatures of registered voters on nomination papers and petition forms.

The 2005 annual register of voters and the Amherst Street List were produced, using information provided on the annual Town census and follow-up confirmation cards.

At the conclusion of the fiscal year, the term of the Chair, Robert McAllister, expired. Mr. McAllister had served on the Board since 1993 and during his tenure he consistently proved to be a very dedicated member and an asset to the Town. His departure from the Board will be a significant loss for the Town. The Town Clerk's Office will especially miss his sense of humor and pleasant demeanor that helped us get through many election nights.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna M. Maciaszek
Clerk of the Board of Registrars

VITAL STATISTICS – FY 2005

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|------------------|------------|
| Births | 181 |
| Marriages | 166 |
| Deaths | 133 |

VOTING INFORMATION – FY 2005 (At March 29, 2005 Annual Town Election)

| <u>Precinct</u> | <u>Number Registered</u> | <u>Poll Location</u> | <u>Elected Town Meeting Members</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | 1,541 | N. Congregational Church | 24 |
| 2 | 1,426 | North Fire Station | 24 |
| 3 | 1,077 | Immanuel Lutheran Church | 24 |
| 4 | 1,099 | Bangs Community Center | 24 |
| 5 | 1,532 | Bangs Community Center | 24 |
| 6 | 2,080 | Fort River School | 24 |
| 7 | 1,847 | Crocker Farm School | 24 |
| 8 | 2,468 | Munson Memorial School | 24 |
| 9 | 1,271 | Wildwood School | 24 |
| 9A | 836 | New Africa House, UMass | 24 |
| 10 | <u>1,124</u> | Bangs Community Center | 24 |
| | 16,301 | | |